

2009 Amherst Police Report

The year has been a busy but productive one for the police department. The department has experienced increasing cases of assault, criminal threatening, criminal mischief, and burglary, while witnessing decreasing numbers in areas such as motor vehicle accidents and arrests. The police department has also been involved with some significant successes over the year, including the successful culmination of a large theft case involving the theft of funds from a local non-profit association, the apprehension of an escaped convict from the Sullivan House of Correction, and the quick arrest of a suspect in the first bank robbery Amherst has experienced in over 30 years. Additionally, the police department played an integral role in the initial response to the Mont Vernon home invasion and homicide, as well as the subsequent investigation and apprehension of the suspects in that case.

Staffing wise, in keeping with previously established staffing levels, two vacant patrol officer positions were filled over the summer months. In June, Officer Sarah Arnold was hired. Sarah came to the Amherst Police Department with previous police related experience at the Hooksett Police Department. In August, Officer Nicholas Skiba was hired. Nick came to Amherst via the Alton Police Department, and because he was previously certified as a police officer in New Hampshire, fourteen weeks of police academy training were avoided. Since that time, the department has lost two other patrolman who left Amherst to work in nearby, larger departments, providing them the prospect of greater financial rewards. Pending a recruitment process, the department will utilize part time coverage, overtime hours, and scheduling adjustments to provide the necessary coverage to the town.

During the year the police department received grant funding of approximately \$20,000, which has allowed the acquisition of important equipment including radio repeater equipment, traffic radar units, and tactical ballistic gear. Because the grant will allow the department to purchase equipment which otherwise would have eventually come from town funding, it has been very beneficial.

Additionally, working from the lessons learned during the December 2008 ice storm, and utilizing some of the newest available technologies, we have updated our ability to communicate with the community. The police department now has an account with the Nixle.com service, which is being used to communicate non-emergency but important information to subscribers via cell phone texting and e-mail. Nixle is being used for such things as traffic and accident advisories and other police or community news items. Additionally, the town's emergency management team has subscribed to the CodeRED emergency notification system. The CodeRED system will be used to make emergency notifications in instances such as weather related emergencies, missing children, significant crimes, and hazardous material emergencies. All residents and interested parties are encouraged to sign up for these services. Electronic links are available via the police department web page www.amherstpolice.com.

The need for additional patrol coverage remains an issue. Funding for a new position was cut from the budget in the 2009-2010 default process, and a subsequent attempt to secure a federal grant to pay for three years of a patrol position was unsuccessful, as it was for most New Hampshire agencies that applied for the same funding. Given the current economic conditions, the pending budget does not contain funding for any additional patrol coverage. However, the increasing need must eventually be addressed.

The department would like to remind everyone of the importance in reporting all unusual or suspicious activity that you may observe. A well timed telephone call from an observant resident can be the needed information to stop or solve a crime and can save hours of police work. The department has seen several cases in this past year which exemplify the value of an involved community, including the apprehension of the escaped convict previously mentioned. Additionally, we encourage everyone to take advantage of the services we provide, such as vacant house checks, the Good Morning Amherst senior citizen call-in program, home security evaluations, and help from the school resource officers with questions related to your

child and the internet, to name just a few.

The police department employees thank the many supportive residents, business people, other town employees and department heads, and community leaders for your continued help and support over the year in accomplishing our goal of providing the best police service available to our town.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter A. Lyon

Chief of Police